



# *Latah County Historical Society*

## **Treasure Great Memories – Preserve Them for the Future** *Papers and Photographs*

Treat your treasured papers and photographs as you would treat your family. Avoid extremes and fluctuations in temperature and humidity – never store them in a damp basement or hot attic. Even a bookcase against a poorly insulated exterior wall can undergo temperature and humidity changes not noticed in the rest of the room. Paper items and photographs are best stored at room temperature and humidity levels that people find most comfortable. Avoid contact with adhesives, inks, paints, labels, and tape. Metal cabinets and storage furniture, interior closets, and shelves offer the safest, long term storage for your collections.

The deterioration of paper is caused by many factors, perhaps the most significant of which are the kinds of materials and chemicals used in the paper making process. Wood pulp, containing lignum and aluminosizing, forms damaging acids over time. Under prolonged exposure to ultraviolet light and oxygen, paper fibers break down, causing them to discolor and become brittle. Additional damage may be caused by dust, dirt, mold, insects, rodents, and excessive handling.

Carefully scan your documents and photographs to reduce handling and exposure to damaging light. Prints can then be made for you and others interested in them.

**Remember, photographs and documents from Latah County may also be interesting to others associated with the county – talk to the staff at the Latah County Historical Society to discuss adding copies of your photographs and papers to the society’s historic photograph collection and archives.**

Simple environmental techniques can be used to control damage to your treasured papers and photographs:

### **Keep away from extremes**

- Cool, dark, and dry storage areas are ideal
- Relative humidity of approximately 50%
- Temperature of 62 to 68 degrees
- Clean area, free of insects and rodents
- Low light levels

### **Choose the right storage containers**

- Acid-free (8.5 pH\*) storage boxes, folders, and interleaf paper

**We build good citizens, strong communities, and satisfying lives.**

327 East Second Street, Moscow, Idaho 83843 | 208.882.1004

[www.latahcountyhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.latahcountyhistoricalsociety.org) | [lchslibrary@latah.id.us](mailto:lchslibrary@latah.id.us)



# *Latah County Historical Society*

Designed to provide physical support and stability  
Comfortably filled, not overstuffed, materials supported

## **Careful attention to preparation**

Remove loose dust and dirt with soft brush  
Remove staples, paper clips, rubber bands, and other devices which rust or disintegrate  
Remove loose adhesives  
Place like-sized documents and papers together  
Interlayer with acid-free sheets between items

## **Avoid further damage**

Work on clean surfaces  
Wash your hands frequently and wear clean gloves to avoid fingerprints  
Keep the area free of food and drink

\*8.5 pH, 3% carbonate buffer added, free of groundwood and lignum

Simple techniques can be used to allow you and others enjoyment of your documents, papers, and photographs when they are not in storage.

## **Encapsulation**

Encapsulation is a way of protecting papers and photographs while allowing them to be handled and seen. This is accompanied by cutting two pieces of acid-free polyester film larger than the document. Measure the item and apply double-sided tape at least 1/8" beyond these dimensions on one piece of film. Place the item inside the boundaries of the tape, being careful not to allow contact with the adhesive. Remove the tape's paper backing and apply the second sheet of film, starting at the bottom edge and smoothing slowly up to seal all four sides. Trim to size. Your treasured item is completely sealed and protected without damage. Encapsulation, unlike lamination, allows you to easily remove the item at a later date by cutting away the taped border.

## **Protective envelopes and sleeves**

You can also make or purchase envelopes and sleeves with two open sides. Clear films allow full vision of the image but also allow light exposure. Papers are opaque and block light. They are also porous and help prevent accumulation of moisture and gases. Viewing is more difficult since you have to remove them and handling can cause fingerprints and other damage. Wear clean gloves and work on clean surfaces to protect your treasures.

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## Documentation

What are these photographs and papers worth without identification? Include any information you can about the items: when and how you got them, actual or approximate dates of their creation (use *circa* for approximate date), your interpretation of the content with a note that it is your thought. And help your descendants by identifying people, places, events, and dates of your own photos and papers.

## Marking devices

Acid-free pens are available online and through archival supply houses. Marking pens should dry instantly to a permanent, smudge-proof, and waterproof mark on plastics, glass, and all smooth surfaces. Try to avoid marking the actual item if possible. It is best to include the identification on the holder, or on the back of the item if possible; never write directly on the front of a photo.

We all know how frustrating it can be to find a wonderful old photograph or clipping with no identification or date. Don't forget to identify the people, places, and dates of your photographs, clippings, and documents. You know the stories behind your treasured items but will your descendants?

**Enjoy your treasured papers and photographs, preserve them for the future!**

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